



Palmer Mason, Director,  
New Palm Beach  
Service Center

# The Door Is Always Open at Your Neighborhood Service Center

*South Florida Water Management District Service Centers are the critical links between the regional agency – headquartered in West Palm Beach – and the local communities throughout our 16-county jurisdiction. Through these nine satellite offices, the District strives to provide a greater understanding of agency programs and projects; to bring agency services closer to the people we serve; to strengthen and build strong partnerships; and to promote a greater involvement and presence in the local community. Our Service Centers are doing just that. Here's a closer look at some of the diverse partnership projects and initiatives happening right now at District Service Centers.*

## Florida Keys Service Center

Cecelia Weaver, Director  
Islamorada • (305) 853-3219



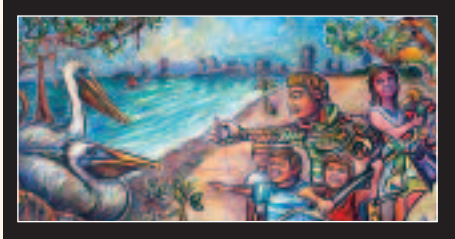
Water conservation is everywhere you look – especially if you're in the Florida Keys. From buses and bus shelters to billboard advertising, the District and the Florida Keys Aqueduct Authority are bringing messages imparting the importance of water conservation. Coming soon to a Florida Keys accommodation near you ... messages promoting linen reuse and water saving technologies. The District is also doing its part to improve water quality as a sponsor, with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, of a \$100 million program for the planning, design and construction of treatment works to improve near shore water quality in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary.

In addition to conserving and improving the quality of water, the Florida Keys Service Center and the Nature Conservancy have partnered on native species restoration, invasive exotic plant control and fire management projects on public and private lands.

## Miami-Dade Service Center

Jose Fuentes, Director  
Miami • (305) 377-7274

Have you discovered Biscayne Bay? Visit the Miami Children's Museum to treat your eyes to the "Discover Biscayne Bay" mural, by Miami-based artist Xavier Cortada, which is one component of a



comprehensive education program designed to raise awareness about issues relating to Biscayne Bay such as stormwater runoff, deterioration of marine habitat, visual and physical access, and boater safety. The mural was commissioned by the Biscayne Bay Environmental Education Alliance, which is a consortium of more than 30 public and private organizations. The programs are funded

through a contract between Citizens for a Better South Florida and the South Florida Water Management District.

Other education efforts include hands-on activities with students to teach water quality monitoring, training volunteers to identify and plant drought-tolerant plants for watershed preservation, a boater safety course designed to protect sea grass beds and marine habitat, public forums and a Biscayne Bay underwater film.

## Big Cypress Basin Service Center

Clarence Tears, Director  
Naples • (239) 597-1505

The District linked arms with another museum, the Imaginarium Children's Museum in Fort Myers, to feature an Everglades exhibit. This hands-on science museum for children is housed in a former water treatment plant and features special exhibits throughout the year in addition to the permanent collection. From June 15 – Sept. 15 the special exhibit will be "Exploring the Everglades."



While in the classroom, children in the Big Cypress Basin area also gain invaluable environmental knowledge. The Big Cypress Basin Service Center helped the Collier Environmental Education Consortium supply environmental school awards to 23 public and private schools in Collier County in recognition of their environmental education programs. The schools completed requirements for three different award levels: "Recognition level" with a \$100 cash award for seven schools, "Participation Level" with a \$200 cash award for six schools and "Full Participation" with a \$400 cash award to 10 schools. Total cash awards equaled \$5,900. The Collier Environmental Education Consortium is comprised of public, private and government agencies that help supply schools in Collier County with environmental education.

## Broward Service Center

Michael Jackson, Director  
Plantation • (954) 713-3200

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are land, industrial and waste management techniques that reduce pollutant load from an industry or land use. They provide a voluntary way for communities and groups to take care of local water resources on their own. The Broward Service Center is working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to

develop BMPs for nurseries and horse owners in Broward County that will minimize the off-site movement of phosphorus and other potential pollutants in water resources.

The Broward effort involves interagency partnerships with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, University of Florida, Department of Environmental Protection, Broward County Department of Planning & Environmental Protection, and the Broward County Extension Education Division. The Florida Farm Bureau Federation, Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association, and the South Florida Trail Riders Association are just a few of the community and special interest groups joining the interagency partnerships.

## Palm Beach Service Center

Palmer Mason, Director  
West Palm Beach • (561) 682-6794

The great number of water resource projects in Palm Beach County, coupled with the sheer size of the county, necessitated a local service center located at District headquarters to act as the liaison between the agency and surrounding communities. Right out of the gate in April, the new Palm Beach Service Center partnered with the Department of Environmental Protection, Solid Waste Authority, and the city of West Palm Beach to celebrate Earth Day as part of "Clematis by Night." The more the merrier is how the saying goes, and that was the reasoning behind this year's celebration in downtown West Palm Beach, which differs from past years when the agencies each held separate events. More than 3,000 people attended



the event, for which the District sponsored The Earthman – a musician whose music is environmentally themed.

## Okeechobee Service Center

Bob Brown, Director  
Okeechobee • (863) 462-5260

Lake Okeechobee is at the heart of the Kissimmee-Okeechobee-Everglades ecosystem, and restoration efforts for the lake is at the heart of partnerships in this rural area. Government projects have economic impact in the rural area of the state both on local governments and agriculture. Public/private partnerships geared toward replacing lost revenues while meeting strict water quality goals for



Lake Okeechobee are among the District's top priorities. Local government partnerships through the Okeechobee Service Center also are working toward replacing septic tanks with expanded sewer systems and creation of Stormwater Master Plans, urban stormwater management systems and Stormwater Treatment Areas that help with water quality problems in urban runoff.

Many projects and programs are involved in assisting rural economies through the Governor's Rural Economic Development Initiative. Several counties and communities within District boundaries have been designated by the Florida Legislature as Rural Areas of Critical Economic Concern. The District works closely with these communities to provide services that will help them to remain sustainable into the future.

## Lower West Coast Service Center

Jacque Rippe, Director  
Fort Myers • (239) 338-2929

Following the wet years of the late 1990s, the District moved toward increasing the carrying capacity of the area's natural systems by entering into a five-year partnership with Lee and Hendry counties to clean rivers, creeks and branches of overgrown exotic vegetation, trash and debris. When waterways are functioning at their capacity, flowing freely without debris and clogged vegetation, they provide natural flood protection and water storage as well as improving water quality. This partnership has allowed southwest Florida to retain many natural waterways.

The City of Cape Coral, in partnership with the District, switched to reverse osmosis treatment to provide potable water for a growing population. The city also installed a residential dual water system that provides irrigation water. The cities of Fort Myers, Bonita Springs and Naples followed suit with innovative methods to stretch the limited water resources while providing a reliable and high-quality product. Reverse osmosis systems are the norm now in the coastal islands of southwest Florida and will be for all the major utilities. At the same time the Lower West Coast Service Center is working with the local governments on a Regional Irrigation Distribution System that, when completed, will provide an adequate supply of irrigation water to be shared throughout the region.